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Housekeeper's Chat

Friday, August 15, 1930.

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U. S. Department of Agriculture

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Subject: "When We Eat Along the Roadside". Menu for a pick-up-and-go picnic from the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. D. A.

Bulletin available: "Cooking Beef According to the Cut."

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I promised in my talk yesterday to tell you what foods we took for our picnic that ended in a thunderstorm. It turned out, with one thing and another, that I had to pick up what I had on hand, and collect my basketful of food in more or less of a hurry — then it rained just as we had everything ready to eat, and we had to scramble back into the automobile to keep dry. So as a whole the picnic itself wasn't so good, but the food was. I'd like to recommend our menu to anyone else who wants to picnic without much advance preparation.

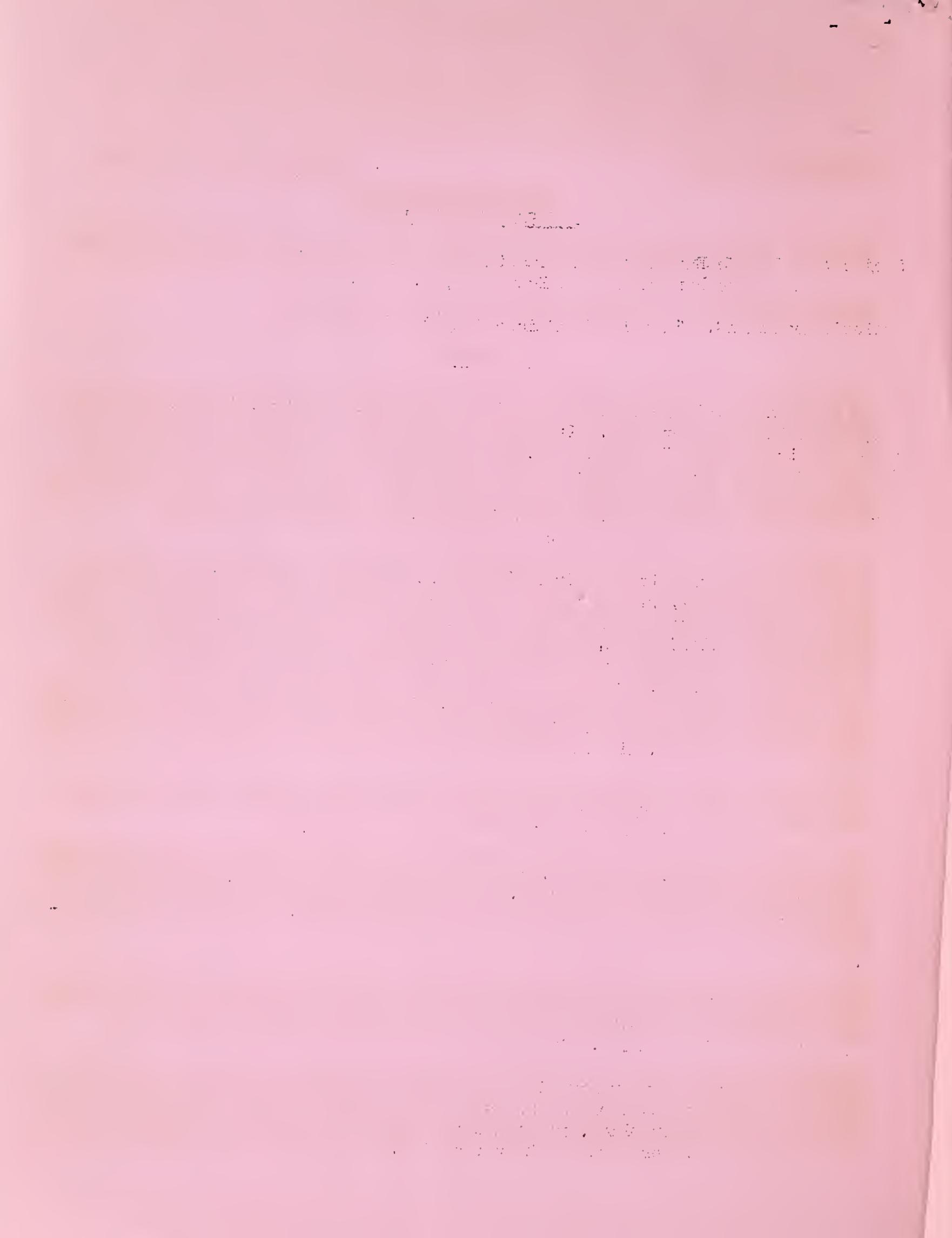
To begin with, we went to Rock Creek Park. There you can find any number of special picnic places, with rustic tables and benches, fireplaces, and running water. We expected to cook part of our meal out of doors. We took the frying pan, a pound of sliced bacon, and a box of eggs. Also bread, butter, a bread knife, and a table knife for spreading sandwiches. Before the rain struck us we had cooked the bacon, fried the eggs, buttered the bread, and made enough fried-egg-and-bacon sandwiches to go around. While Billy and I were doing this, some of the others in the party fixed the cucumbers and tomatoes. The tomatoes were cut in thin slices, the cucumbers pared and cut in strips, to be eaten with salt.

Cheese-and lettuce sandwiches were made by one of the guests. Some of us put our sliced tomato inside the sandwiches when we ate them.

Then we had milk for the children, coffee in a thermos bottle for the grown-ups, and several different kinds of fruit. The piece de resistance (pronounced pe-ace de ray-sist-onc) as the French say, was a watermelon. We cut it into wedge-shaped sections, easy to eat in the hand without forks. There were cup cakes, too.

Now, can you imagine what happened when that thunderstorm came up? I'll draw a hasty curtain over the picture of four ladies and five children, all laden with food, scrambling for shelter. Anyway, the watermelon didn't suffer much.

I imagine you all have your favorite things for wayside picnics or week-end automobile trips with most of the meals eaten out-of-doors. If you could always count on a suitable fireplace, you could cook steaks, chops, frankfurts, bacon, or almost any quickly prepared dish over a fire. Hamburg steak made up ahead of



time, circled with bacon, and cooked in an iron skillet over the fire, is usually very popular. Serve it in split buttered rolls -- the large flat round ones, if you can get them. Or between slices of bread. You will find a recipe for these Hamburg cakes in the leaflet, "Cooking Beef According to the Cut."

One New England family I have heard of makes a regular practice, through many months of the year, of taking its hot baked beans and Boston brown bread off to a shack in the woods every Saturday evening for a picnic supper. If friends care to come, they are made welcome, and may bring any other contributions to the meal they wish. The main dish, though, is the pot of warm baked beans with its traditional accompaniment of brown bread.

One of our picnic guests was an Englishwoman. She told us about wayside teas she used to enjoy as a girl on the River Thames.

"We used to hire boats called 'randans'" she said, "and get up a party of ten or twelve people to go up the river for tea almost every Saturday afternoon. Randans are big heavy boats that take three or four people at the oars. I don't know whether you would see them nowadays. When we went there weren't any automobiles, and we liked the boat trips because we could carry our tea things so easily. We started at Kew Gardens, or Maidstone, or further up the river, and kept on going until it was time to have tea. That meant tea, really--a kettle put on to boil over an open fire, and tea served in big tin cups. While we were waiting for the water to boil, we made our sandwiches out of the bread, butter, and jam or marmalade we brought with us, and watched the other people go by in their boats. The river would be gay with young people in bright-colored clothes moving along, some of them singing or playing instruments and all of them planning to stop, as we had, in a convenient place for tea."

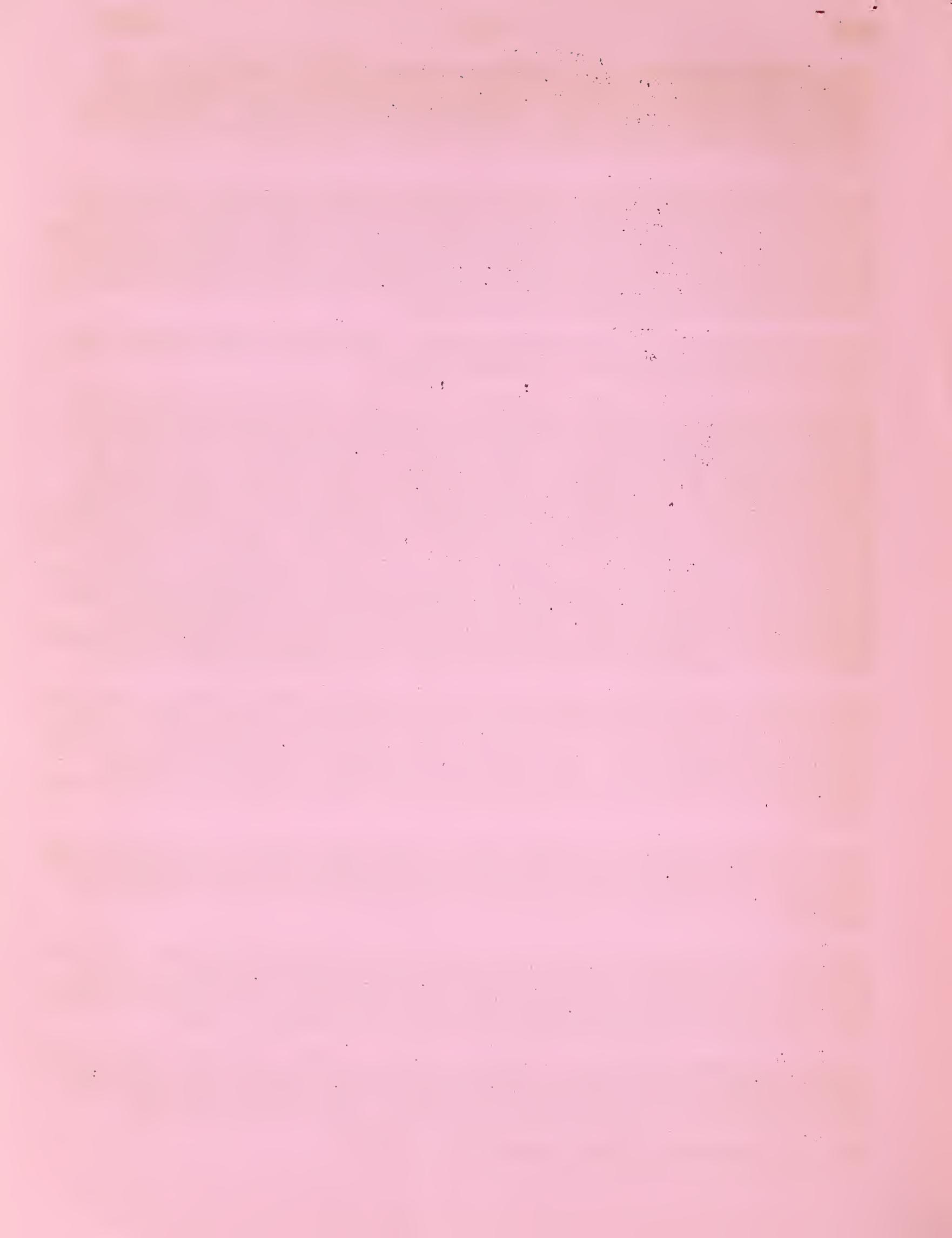
"One thing we often brought from home that you might like was sausage turnovers. You cook the sausage meat in round flat cakes until it is done, then cut them in half. Make pastry, cut it in large rounds, and fold a half-circle of cooked sausage meat inside each. Bake until nicely browned. These are splendid, either hot or cold, and on a picnic you can eat them in your hand, without table silver."

One more picnic "gooden", as Billy used to call nice things to eat, when he was about two. To this very day, if I catch Uncle Ebenezer prowling around my ice box after ten o'clock, he will explain by saying he was "merely looking for gooden."

Get some of the long soft rolls that are often used with frankfurts. Cut them in half, in the middle, and scoop out most of the crumb from the lower half. Mix canned salmon with chopped lettuce, salad dressing, and seasoning, including a few drops of lemon, and fill the rolls with the salmon salad.

I have an unusual question to read you today. I asked the Weather Man for the answer, because after my visit to the Weather Bureau I wasn't sure one could pay any attention to sayings about the weather. This is the question:

"Is a red sun in the evening a sure sign of rain?"



This is what I was told: "Most old-time weather proverbs are absurd and misleading. However, a few are interesting as reflecting the accuracy of observation by those who are out in all weather, and useful when the morning paper is not at hand to furnish a forecast.

"Proverbs that have to do with the color of the sky, and the appearances of the sun, the moon, and the stars, indicate conditions affected by the state of the atmosphere. When the air is heavily charged with dust particles, laden with moisture, we see the sun as a fiery red ball, and predict rain, in such proverbs as: "A red sun has water in his eye", or, "If red the sun begin his race, be sure the rain will fall apace." The red sun implies a humid atmosphere, a condition essential and favorable to the occurrence of rain."

The Weather Man told me about a book of very interesting weather sayings, most of them discredited now in the light of modern science and our complete methods of forecasting. It seems as if the chief effect of some of these sayings was to help the farmer and his workers to "Do it now", since they contained dire warnings of what would happen if certain farming operations were put off too long.

Speaking of the weather, if you have sour milk on hand, remember there's an excellent bulletin, "Making and Using Cottage Cheese." No better way to use up sour milk than in cottage cheese. The Department of Agriculture tells just how to make this good, old-fashioned cheese, in a bulletin free to anyone who asks for it.

Another timely bulletin is "Making Vinegar in the Home and on the Farm." Good vinegar can be made from many fruits that are wasted in orchards and gardens -- not only apples, but other fruits. Send for this publication in time to save some of your surplus material from going to waste.

Next Monday: "How to Make Dill and Other Pickles."

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